

EARLY FACTS OF HISTORY OF BIG SPRINGS, BELLVIEW, BONARLAW

So many hundred year old farms were discovered during the past centennial year that it seems reasonable to date this write-up within the last one hundred years.

Looking back, we see a muchly wooded district with a corduroy road as the main artery going through Harold and Springbrook to Marmora. It is likely all the concession roads were surveyed and marked out at the saem time but concessions ten and twelve were the most settled and important to our little burgs.

Judging from the number of centennial farms in the twelfth concession it apparently was one of the areas cleared and settled very early in the sixties. The school, one of the earliest community buildings, served as a church as well as a school. Rev. Harris of Marmora served God and mankind for forty-four years in this area.

In 1882 a nice little brick Anglican church was built on the twelfth concession and before that a cheese factory had been started and also Allen's Mills. It was most important to the progress of this area as it sawed the logs into lumber and also ground the grain. It was situated on the Trent River about five miles farther on, on the twelfth concession. ^{Crowe}

Let us retrace our steps now to the little brick church and come out to where the twelfth concession joins the main road. Here on the corner Mr. Tom Neal built a nice home. It was in this home a little later that Mrs. Everett Heath was born and later this home became our Anglican rectory.

Mr. Neal built a number of homes in the district. Mr. Jesse Neal had a black smith shop and a home on the east side of the road opposite Mr. Tom Neal's home. For a number of years our port office was in Mr. Jesse Neal's home.

Turning to the north is Bonarlaw proper, in those days, Big Springs, upon the top of a sharp little knoll, Mr. Alfred Eastwood had their home and land surrounding. Later on Mr. Munroe Prestly, Mr. Eastwood's son-in-law, seemed to manage, if not own the land.

Four names which stand out in this very early history of this area is Shambolt, Alcock, Buck and Hurst. The one part of the Eastwood farmland had been purchased by Mr. Dave Heath and a little later Mr. Byron Heath. Mr. Shambolt had an interest in the Heath farm. Mr. Buck was perhaps the earliest settler as a lumberman. Mr. Alcock had a tavern on the Heath farm and Mr. Hurst and his brother built a home south of where the station stands which was demolished shen the railroad was built.

The biggest boost for the community was the coming of the railroads. There was some competition as to which railroad would get to this area first and report has it that the Central Ontario railroad was first but the difference was of little importance.

The railroads crossed here and formed a diamond and it was one of the best known names this station had. Its official name being the C.P.R. Junction or C.O.R. Junction.

Things really developed after the coming of the railroad. A fairly large station was built with small living quarters attached and Mr. John Bell was the first station agent. There was a water tank built south of the station which supplied water for the trains.

A road was built from the station to the main road and for many years a bus and taxi service was carried on from Marmora. The mail from Marmora was also put on the mail trains here.

In the hey day of this place there were twenty-six trains in twenty-four hours. There was an agent and two operators in the day and two operators at night. There was also a baggage man.

Mr. Henry Brown sold a strip of land off his farm. On this land there was a hotel and stables built. At one end of the brick hotel building a general store sprang into being and had a good business. Mr. Dave Leury was one of the early assistants and two of the girls Tilly Webb and Lizzy Rombough, later Mrs. J.F. Baker and Mrs. T. Prest respectively, of the neighborhood were long time assistants in the store. It was at this time the post office was moved to Mr. Bell's store and the name of the village changed from Big Springs to Bellview.

Several nice homes were built in the neighborhood. Mr. Munroe Prestley's home, where Mr. and Mrs. Everett Heath live now; then Mr. Byron's new home, and Mr. John Bell's home across from the store. Mr. George Webb built the home now occupied by Mr. Rathwell. Mr. H. Brown purchased the land on the east side of the road. For a while until a suitable home could be built he and Mrs. Brown lived over Mr. Prestley's black smith shop. This was at the corner down from where the Brown homestead now stands. Later on Mr. Brown had a home built for his son John, on the site where Mr. and Mrs. W.J. Barlow live. Mr. and Mrs. William Neal lived and raised their family just across the road from the black smith shop. A goodly number of their descendants are still in the vicinity.